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## The ideal Position of Bi-Vocational Ministry amid African Ministers

### *La Position Idéale du Ministère Bi-vocationnel parmi les Ministres Africains*

Elias Ngomediage, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract

Ever since the gospel was introduced to the African soil by the Western missionaries, there has been a misinterpretation of the call to bi-vocational ministry. Most African Christian denominations do not believe that followers of Christ with holy orders can efficaciously serve Christ while working to meet the financial needs of their family. The propensity is always to require such a person to relinquish their secular occupation and uniquely devote themselves to their ecclesiastical function. Drawing from scriptural analysis, documentary research, and his own field observation, the author of this article enters the debate. His examination of the understanding of secular work from the perspectives of both the Old and the New Testaments as well as some current worldviews and their influence on the African churches has led him to argue that a Christ-follower can profitably combine religious vocation and secular work. The example of the Apostle Paul and his missionary team is examined as an ideal to emulate.

**Key words:** bi-vocational, bi-vocationalism, Christian ministry, African ministers

#### Résumé

Depuis que l'évangile a été introduit sur le sol africain par les missionnaires occidentaux, il y a eu une mauvaise interprétation de l'appel au ministère bi-vocationnel. La plupart des confessions chrétiennes africaines ne croient pas que les disciples du Christ ayant reçu les ordres sacrés puissent servir efficacement le Christ tout en travaillant pour répondre aux besoins financiers de leur famille. La propension est toujours d'exiger que le disciple du Christ renonce à son occupation séculière et se consacre uniquement à sa fonction ecclésiastique. S'appuyant sur l'analyse des Écritures, la recherche documentaire et ses propres observations sur le terrain, l'auteur de cet article entre dans le débat. Son examen de la compréhension du travail séculier du point de vue de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament, ainsi que de certaines visions du monde actuelles et de leur influence sur les églises africaines, l'a amené à soutenir qu'un disciple du Christ peut combiner avec profit vocation religieuse et travail séculier. L'exemple de l'apôtre Paul et de son équipe missionnaire est examiné comme un idéal à imiter.

**Mots clés :** bi-vocationnel, bi-vocationalisme, ministère chrétien, ministres africains

#### Introduction

Many pastors of rural Protestant congregations in Cameroon are struggling to survive. The model which they have received from the missionaries who first carried the message of the Christ to their lands does not allow them to meet even the most basic of the economic needs of their families. This is typical of those ministerial officers serving in rural and semi-urban towns and villages where the congregants who make up these communities of faith are poor and are themselves just getting by.

In response to this need, it is not uncommon to find denominations who supply some financial aid to the pastor for a set period during which it is anticipated that he will nurture the faithful to the point where they can take on the payment of this stipend. All too often, however, this plan fails, and the pastor is obliged to move to a city for better ministry opportunities and

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increased financial support. Thus, the church is unable to become self-supporting and self-propagating in a rural setting. It is obvious that this dilemma is not only a Cameroonian problem but is also true of many other African nations as well as ministers in rural communities in the West.

I maintain that the underlying source of this predicament is not purely financial. It also involves the way in which these leaders, and their Christian traditions, understand what it means to exercise a divine call to “full time” ministry or to serve a congregation as “ordained” clergy.

A survey of the New Testament (NT) reveals that some of Christ’s first followers were led to withdraw from their secular labor while others continued to “work with their hands” (Matt. 4:18-22; 1 Thess. 2:9 & 2 Thess. 3:7-9) even while they served the Christ. This observation raises some salient questions about the place of work in the life of Christ’s followers. For example, should a disciple of Christ view daily labor as something that impedes him/her from spiritual pursuits akin to prayer, Bible study, and worship which should distinguish the lifestyle of followers of Christ? In what ways might an African disciple’s daily vocation be perceived as an act of service and worship to Christ? Must that disciple imperatively have to desert his or her daily labor to be considered a “full time” servant of God? Contrastingly, does bi-vocational ministry have its own *raison d’être*? How did the first followers of Christ comprehend their daily labor? How might discipleship be impeded if an African follower of Christ does not recognize the sanctity of his/her daily labor?

The constraints of this article will not allow for an examination of some other pertinent questions, however. Questions dealing with whether an African pastor might find work in a rural setting, or what kind of training he might need to earn a living in such an environment do not fall within the scope of this study. To answer those questions that do, I will begin by examining some NT texts which suggest that discipleship to Christ, in some way, excludes secular labor. It is important to begin with these texts because they reveal how Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, selected the initial disciples who would carry on with the movement after him. We will also look at a few NT passages which admonish Christ’s followers to toil with their hands. These texts are valuable because they reveal how the next generation of disciples served him faithfully without renouncing their daily secular labor. How did the men who were trained by the first disciples of Jesus value secular labor in the life of a disciple of the Christ?

Since the Old Testament (OT) texts were the sacred Scriptures that fed the understanding of the first followers of the Christ, I will take some time to examine their teaching on this subject next. This is also important given that they were the pioneer disciples of the Christian movement to whose everyday lives the Epistles were directed.

### **Two Important NT Texts About Secular Labor**

Studies have shown many of the ways in which Christendom changed the perceptions and practices of the first followers of Christ (Bjork 2015, p. 176). In the early stages of the Christian movement, the gatherings of Christ’s followers were more loosely structured, relational and less program-oriented than contemporary ecclesiastical models. There is no single explanation why those congregations took this configuration. Perhaps it is because they were often illegal. Whatever the case, what is fascinating and astonishing is that the disciples came from different walks of life and were all enthusiastically involved in ministry in a more relational and informal network. This so often happened during their random trips and haphazard meetings.

However, this model of *ecclesia* experienced a short life span due both to the growth of the movement and its legalization in the fourth century by Constantine; the Roman Emperor who gave it an official status. This led to the birth of an ecclesial organization similar to that of the State whereby, the clergy was completely distinguished from the faithful constituting a distinct

social category. This style of ministry devised after the fourth century has endured up till date within many faith communities. It requires a minister to abstain from other professional or secular callings to give full attention to the call to ministry.

Some Christian traditions refer to Jesus' call of his first disciples as recorded in Matthew 4:18-22 to justify their stand. Jesus' call to Simon and Andrew as recorded in Matthew's Gospel gives the impression of being a radical abandonment of their work as fishermen. In like manner the disciples' reaction to this call also appears radical. Jesus used his authority to call Simon, his brother Andrew, James son of Zebedee and his brother John to follow him. Analyzing these two verses, Craig (1997, pp. 97-98) asserts that, this contrasts with the early Jewish and Greek traditions, where would-be disciples were always the ones who picked out their teachers. He maintains that rabbis like Jesus could even repudiate or rebuff some prospective disciples.

It is also important to observe that Jesus did not choose as his initial disciples, men who were seen as experts in the Jewish law such as the Pharisees. This is antithetical to what one might have expected. As authorities in Jewish law, they would seem to have been better suited to carry on his teaching. However, the opposite was true; Jesus called seasoned fishermen. Jesus' decision to choose these men may be because their job necessitated much patience, perseverance, and courage. It could also be that he chose them because they had acquired, through their daily work, the parameters they would need to become fishers of men.

Matthew documents how these men 'promptly' left everything and followed Jesus (Matthew 4:20). This action might be interpreted as a sign of genuine obedience and loyalty to Jesus. This is obviously the comprehension of Darrell (2002) who highlights that the disciples left what they were doing to become Jesus' followers (p. 49). This radical positive reply from these men certainly looks all-consuming as it seems that they abandoned families and family businesses to follow Jesus. Craig's (1997) study explains that fisher-men had more income than many habitants of Galilee, which suggests that these men left behind good jobs to follow Jesus.

Bruner (2007, p. 142) has also commented on this passage, citing Calvin, who insisted that the call of the four brothers is not the model for all Christians. Instead Bruner views it as an appropriate description of how ordained ministers are called. His interpretation sounds rational taking into consideration that Jesus cannot call all believers to leave their work. For this reason, Bruner maintains that Jesus calls some people to leave their non-religious vocation, while others are not.

Another important episode where discipleship seems to be contrary to secular labor is Luke's story of Jesus and his disciples in Martha's home (Luke 10:38-42). Here again, physical labor seems to be less important than the spiritual disciplines often associated with Christian discipleship. In this reading, it is implied that Martha should have been like her sister Mary, sitting at the feet of the Lord listening to him (Luke 10:39). However, in the text it appears that Mary alone decided to place herself in such a posture. But the Lord Jesus did not reprimand Martha for her decision. Instead, he acclaimed her for her choice (Luke 10:41-42). Jesus declared that Mary had chosen what was better but appears not to dismiss what Martha was doing in the kitchen. The text does not show Jesus scolding Martha for her work. Perhaps, the purpose of this incident was not to condemn the labor of Martha, but rather to demonstrate that women are worthy of instruction contrary to the customs of the times as Darrell (2002) has observed.

I would suggest that these two examples show that in calling men and women to follow him Jesus wants to redefine everything they do, even their work as fishermen or their daily tasks as women. I suggest that this has less to do with their achievements than with their willingness to



be reshaped and instructed. In this way, these texts do not deny the validity of secular labor. They highlight rather the necessary openness of the Christ-follower to the one by whom and for whom all things were created (Col. 1:16).

By all indications, the Lord Jesus as the son of a carpenter, learned and worked at that trade at some period in his life (Mark 6:3). As already noted, the Apostle Paul was not hesitant to speak about his work as a tent maker, but was instead proud of it using it as an example for others (Acts 18:3; 2 Thess. 3:7-10). The Apostle's instruction in 2 Thess. 3:7-10 reveals how significant work is to humankind. James, who was a brother of Jesus, speaks of the wealthy field owners who ill-treated their workers and warned them of God's wrath (James 5:4-6). Paul and James help us realize that secular work was valued in the early church and that many believers worked for others and, from that, received a salary to support themselves and their families. Although some workers were treated harshly, the follower of the Christ was taught to honor laborers and work as a whole.

Ostring (2015, p. 41) in talking about secular work in the early years of the Christ's movement looks to Tertullian who in the third century A.D., contending in his *Apology*, that "ordinary" (non-sacred) work, manual or intellectual, was looked on by Christ's followers as a standard aspect of their lives. Her study reveals that Tertullian long established that Christ-followers at that time were associated with all occupations, excluding those having to do with idol-making, acting in pagan theatres, astrology and the sponsoring of gladiatorial combats.

### **Discipleship and Secular Labor: Friends or Foes?**

The idea of doing ministry in tandem with another full-time professional calling otherwise known as bi-vocational ministry is not fashionable among most faith communities in Africa and in Cameroon in particular. This is especially true of those who are usually categorized as dominant denominations as well as some eminent Pentecostal denominations. Most faith communities, principally Evangelicals, do not encourage their members to engage in bi-vocational style ministry. The rationale they usually advance is that a minister will have divided attention and be partially committed to ministry as he or she hustles to meet personal and family needs. This is perceived as a handicap to being an effective minister.

Some faith communities are of the opinion that persons associated with ministry this way tend to concentrate on pursuing earning a living rather than being fully involved. They are seen as not having been called into ministry but have only decided to "enter" the ministry for their own personal benefit. Several years ago, I had a pastor who did not believe anyone involved in any other occupation, even part time, has been truly called into ministry. I have also crossed paths with many others like him in villages and towns in Cameroon. However, more recently I have also encountered a few who are doing the work of ministry in association with other callings. The questions we will attempt to answer here are: "Can a person do ministry in association with other professional callings? Are there some examples of those who faithfully serve Christ through their professions?"

This was obviously the practice of the Apostle Paul and his compatriots who chose to toil and preach the gospel while in Thessalonica. In 1Thessalonians 2:9, Paul gives the impression that the brethren were aware of his hard work while among them. The reason he and his colleagues worked with their own hands was to avoid being a "burden." It appears that their decision to toil to earn a living was to avoid giving the people the feeling that they were preaching for profit. If this is the case, working with their hands might have actually given trustworthiness to their message. It may also be that they wanted to be living testaments among their converts to establish how everyone must work to earn a living and avoid idleness (2 Thess. 3:7-9).

Verse 7 of this text emphasizes that the Pauline teams toil and labor among the Thessalonians while they preached and taught, as an example for everyone to shun laziness. In verse 7b he comes out clearly to say they were not idle while they were with them. Certainly, if they stayed idle, they would have depended on them for their nourishment. Verse 8a shows they toiled to meet their own needs and never depended on anyone else's food without paying for it. In verse 8b the text once again highlights the message that they worked night and day so as not to be a "burden."

The text also seems to make known that it was their regular practice of working every hour of the day. It sounds like the Apostle and his team all worked since the epistle keeps employing the plural 'we'. Even though they could ask for assistance (v. 9), they deliberately choose not to, so that they could be "exemplary". The Pauline idea of toiling and laboring in association with the gospel is also evident in his letter to the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 9:12, 15, and 18). Although he had the right to expect financial support from the converts in his ministry, he refused to use it (Bjork, 2015, p. 24).

From these examples I conclude that Paul, Silas, and Timothy all preached the gospel and, at the same time, supplied for their own physical needs through non-spiritual, secular toiling and labor. They intentionally chose not to regularly appeal for physical or financial support to strengthen their legitimacy as witnesses to the good news of the Lord Jesus, the Christ. This choice also served as a model to the brethren and discouraged idle living. It also seems that their choosing to work with their hands to provide for their needs helped them build bridges with the people around them so as to present the Christ.

### **Labor as it is Perceived in the Old Testament**

It is evident that Jesus of Nazareth and his followers were not ignorant of the OT Scriptures. One only needs to look for the referrals back to the OT in the teachings of Jesus to ascertain this truth. It follows that, examining what the OT says about God's people and labor can shed greater light on the subject.

The first chapter of Genesis which gives a theological account of creation also presents the first doctrine of work. Humans were created and called to labor. God, their Creator, labored and so, humans are expected to emulate their Creator and labor, since they were made in God's likeness. This elevates humans as the purpose of divine labor and crowns them with honor as co-laborers with their Creator over the rest of creation. How might this condition our understanding of the worth of secular labor?

It is possible to infer from Genesis 2:5; 2:15 and 3:17-19 that tilling and toiling the earth (caring for creation) was among the reasons why God created humans. God expects them to participate in his creation plan. Aslo (2007) has expounded on the words "there were no humans to till the ground" (Genesis 2:5) as follows: "Some scholars have suitably discerned in this program the participative and creative theology of human beings" (pp. 97-98). This is to say that God had designed with exactitude, before he created human beings, to charge them with the recurring creative function through Adam's activity of ploughing the earth.

With the above observation in mind, one of the questions worth answering while investigating human labor in the OT context could be: "Does work, as presented in the Genesis account (man ploughing the earth), only imply agricultural activities or does it go much further than just working the soil?" In attempting a response to this question, Aslo (2007) maintains that the Hebrew term translated by "work" conveys a variety of meanings. Drawing from other biblical scholars, he investigates the verb "to work" which is used 317 times in the *Biblia Hebraica* and argues that its use was both secular and religious in the Ancient Middle East. For this reason, he maintains that secular work can be understood both as an act of worship and one of service



to God. He affirms this by using Exodus 3:12 in which the objective was the worship of the Lord at Sinai. He also highlights the word to “serve” found 56 times in the Old Testament (Ex. 4:23; Deut. 6:13; 1 Sam. 7:3; Ps. 100:2; and Jer. 2:20). These scriptures all allude to worship, cultic service or resolutely keeping Yahweh’s covenant as his people. In a negative sense, it can also mean the idolatrous worship of other gods. Aslo (2007) also draws from Wenham who has classified the word “to work” or “to plough” in the same category as “to serve” and argues that it is a very common verb in Hebrew which is often used for cultivating the soil (Gen. 2:5, 15; 3:23; 4:2, 12 etc.) as well as serving God (in a religious sense) as his servant. Moses, Joshua and David are seen and described in that manner as servants of God (Yahweh) in Deut. 34:5; Joshua 24:29; and Ps. 18:1 (pp. 99 - 100).

### **The Relevance Attached to Work and its Application by First Generation Disciples**

Also (2007), drawing from Roh (2000), asserts that if man’s duty of working was evoked in Gen. 2:5 in terms of tilling the earth before human creation, his responsibility became necessary and obligatory both inside (Gen. 2:15) and outside (Gen. 3:23) the Garden of Eden (p.104). In this, he agrees with the way Brueggemann and Anderson see work. For Brueggemann (1982), work is a vocation from God (p. 100) while Anderson (1983) maintains that the language of creation narratives in Genesis is used uniquely to articulate the creation of humankind to whom is given both an identity and a mission (p. 101).

The above view establishes that labor is a divine ordination from God to humankind. Humans are therefore obliged to perceive labor as a divine call from God and to devote themselves wholeheartedly to it. Humans were made for labor and consigning themselves to labor for their own development and the good of others is the finest thing to do. Conversely, idleness and laziness destroy and cannot enhance human development and connection to God. Labor is not only to be grasped from the perspective of tilling the earth but beyond that; to other forms of labor such as work in an office, industry, kitchen, or church. Tribe (1978), cited in Aslo (2007), has rightly pointed out that the tilling and keeping functions changed human life from passivity to participation and that work fulfils both human life and his environment, and provides dignity and integrity (p. 101).

Humankind should view legitimate secular work as God Himself working with men and women to make things new and beautiful, and as a reinstatement of their dignity as co-laborers with the Creator. Humans’ attempt to abstain from work can be inimical to their everyday operation in life and, consequently, will gravely harm their relationship with their creator God, with those around them, and with the environment in which they live. This being said, it is worth indicating that God was not the object of the verbs “to work” or “to till” or “to serve” as evoked in Genesis 2:5; 2:15 and 3:23. However, these passages convey the specific message that the Creator placed in the hands of Adam and humankind as a whole, the duty of ploughing the earth in a bid to serve and honor Him.

I conclude this section by observing that, because of Adam’s divine mandate to work the earth, humankind today is undeniably pursuing spiritual, Creator-honoring, goals regardless of the sort of secular work, if it benefits others and the world in which we live.

### **The Devaluation of Secular Work among Contemporary Christ-followers: The Sacred/Secular Dichotomy**

This section briefly examines how worldviews such as secularism, animism, dualism, and other such philosophies foster a sacred/secular dichotomy in the understanding of work amongst contemporary Christ’s followers.

In an endeavor to describe the Western worldview, which in many ways influences the African worldviews today, Muvengi (2016, p. 7), draws from both Meyers (2011) and Newbigin (1998) who hold that an important dissociation between the spiritual and the physical worlds has happened in the Western worldview. Muvengi enumerates some of the results of that dichotomy. The first of such outcomes, he notes, is that poverty is reduced to a merely material condition having to do with the absence of things like money, water, food, housing, and the lack of just social systems, also materially defined and understood. The second result is that development is lessened correspondingly to a material series of responses designed to overcome these needs. He depicts the separation of the spiritual and the physical as a tenet of modernity which is at present a dominating worldview.

One of the offshoots of this dichotomist worldview is secularism. This belief system is extensively in operation in western cultures as well as in the developing world. According to Darrow (2009), secularism teaches that there is no spiritual reality such that everything is concentrated on the physical reality (p. 5). This view influences people to understand work primarily as a means to accumulate material wealth such that humans work only for the purpose of making material wealth and living a better life.

Another factor influencing the way one understands secular employment is cultural practices that are opposed to biblical practices. My prolonged visits to many villages and towns in Cameroon and other places in Africa to foster intentional discipleship to the Christ have afforded me many occasions to witness these practices that are undergirded by an animistic worldview. Hufnagel, (2002, p. 81) observes that this worldview is more noticeable in developing nations and particularly in African traditional societies. Animism upholds that there is a creator God somewhere who created the world, and later left it under the jurisdiction of the spirits. It is a belief system in which the spirits are at the centre of things rather than God and work is often perceived as a curse. This understanding of work has adverse repercussions on how people of animistic societies (Christian included) understand work.

In many rural areas of Cameroon where I have done sustained ministry, the village dwellers view work as a curse and they see their labors simply as a means for survival. This corroborates Os Hillman (2005) argument that “There is an identity crisis taking place today among Christians in the workplace. Satan desires to render Christians useless in their workplace calling, and his strategy is to make them feel that their work is meaningless or that it is a curse” (p. 22). Even though many people identify with the faith communities during their Christian conversion, a few of them distance themselves from their traditional worldview as a result of spiritual transformation. Some mostly in the North-West region of Cameroon still observe days they call “country Sunday” during which they do not work believing that the gods of the farms visit on those days to bless their yields. J. Schwartz Glenn (2007), citing Shorter, indicates that many African Christians have not had the kind of deep spiritual transformation that affects the presuppositions at the center of their worldviews:

Many African Christians (as well as many Western Christians) have the kind of Christianity which overlays a traditional worldview, allowing them to hold two religious systems simultaneously. The traditional worldview (in this case, animistic) continues to be held as the primary (or ultimate) source of power in the face of demon possession or the threat of being cursed, for example. (pp. 182-183).

This worldview exhibits a split between heaven and earth, and between the spiritual and physical worlds. Whenever this kind of separation between sacred and secular, spiritual and physical, occurs, it has disastrous results. Darrow (2009) maintains that it pressures Christ-followers to think about work in two forms, “the higher calling” (what is sacred) and “the place for spiritual outreach” (what is secular) (p. 12). What this means is that as a serious Christ-

follower, the best thing one can do is to withdraw from the secular arena and proceed into the higher calling. If a Christian is actively serving God in his or her workplace, this is considered not spiritual. In sync with this thinking, some Christians hold that it is better for them to leave their secular work to enter the spiritual arena so that they can be “full time Christian workers.”

Those Africans who are influenced by this viewpoint esteem that only pastors, evangelists, missionaries, church planters, and theologians, who focus uniquely on discharging ecclesiastical responsibility are doing full time Christian work. They have been “freed” as it were from the “curse” of the ordinary labor of other believers. Ministers who discharge ecclesiastical duties in tandem with other work like farming, law, engineering, carpentry, civil service work, have not really received a divine “call” to ministry. To be considered as being in full time service, a Christ-follower must withdraw from secular occupations to become a pastor, evangelist, or missionary. That is why Christ-followers that God uses where they work are frequently advise to leave their secular work to go into full time Christian service. When this does not happen, they are often made to feel guilty.

Another fruit of this split between the spheres of the sacred and the physical is that the secular workplace is seen as a place of outreach. The idea behind this mindset is that a Christian who is not in full time ministry should use his or her workplace as the target of spiritual activities. The workplace is the place of outreach and missions. There, Christ-followers who are not “officially” on mission, can organize Bible studies, prayer meetings and other spiritual activities. This optic allows non-ordained Christ-followers to live and function in the world around them as they work to bring the “higher (sacred) realm” into the “lower (ordinary) realm.” It is a reasoning which is still framed from the unbiblical dichotomy which believes that we are living in two worlds. Michael (2006) describes this reasoning as follows:

For centuries, in varying degrees, the church has held to a clear division between clergy and laity and between sacred and secular. We have thought in terms of those who have a holy calling from God to serve in “full-time” ministry and those who essentially are not called to anything special. For generations, the laity has worked in the secular market place and on the farm in order to generate income to live and to support the sacred work of the clergy. Despite constant teaching on duty of the everyday Christian and the priesthood of all believers, the divide between the “called” and the “uncalled” has continued to grow. And it is very much with us today. (pp. 15-16)

This contrasts significantly with the account of the book of the Acts of the Apostles which relates how the promised Holy Spirit descended on the initial Christ-followers who, in obedience to their risen Lord, were anxiously on standby in the upper room in Jerusalem. From then on, the disciples of Jesus began propagating the gospel to other parts of the world beginning in Judea and continuing to Samaria and to the ends of the world (Acts 1:8). This movement took the gospel into the Greek cities of Asia Minor and Europe.

However, despite the entry of these initial Christ-followers into the above-mentioned cultures, Darrow (2009) maintains that the Greco-Roman remained very much influenced by the Greek philosophers like Plato (c. 428-348 BC) who saw reality in two realms, the material being but a shadow of the spiritual. Others like Pythagoras and their schools of thought separated the physical from the spiritual, viewing the material world from a negative perspective. As a result of these concepts, physical labor was seen as a second-class use of time and talents with little or no value. Many of these beliefs and concepts strongly influenced the early church fathers and the entire Jesus movement.

Another belief system that influenced the movement of Christ-followers was Gnosticism. Of this philosophy, Darrow (2009) writes: “Gnosticism was a widespread and highly varied

thought movement that arose before Christianity and continues to develop in company with it” (p. 17). Gnosticism is a belief that the material world is evil and profane. This movement has grown side by side with the Jesus’ movement and is contrary to the Incarnation. The word “Gnosticism” signifies sacred and mysterious knowledge that is communicated through revelation which allows an individual to escape the material world and move to a higher level, to the eternal and spiritual world. By the second century, this movement, growing alongside the Jesus movement, influenced Christ-followers and became a significant element of the church worldview. Darrow (2009) believes that even though early Christ-followers fought hard against this philosophy and its worldview, there is no doubt that some of it still permeated into the church and continues to do so today (p. 18).

History shows that the Jesus movement was impacted by the surrounding cultures, philosophies and movements that preceded it. Darrow (2009) has asserted that this is how the idea of monasticism sprang forth in which the primary objective was to live a solitary lifestyle. Even though the objective of these monks was to emulate the example of some biblical figures like Jesus of Nazareth (Mark 1:12-13) and the Apostle John who was exiled to the island of Patmos (Revelations 1:9-10), they exhibited undue extremism in their rejection of the world and pursuit of perfect union with Father God. This has a resonance in the dualistic philosophies of Gnostics.

Regardless of the rapid growth of the Jesus Movement in Europe and other continents of the world, there is no doubt that it inherited the dualistic philosophy that preceded it. This can be seen in the writings of the early church fathers such as Eusebius (c. 260 – c. 339). By way of contrast, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli, leaders of the Reformation, taught that there is no area of man’s life that is excluded from the sacred and they emphasized the priesthood of every believer. Along these lines, Alister McGrath (2001) writes:

The reformation changed such attitudes (of dualism in the workplace), decisively and irreversibly. To illustrate this change in attitude, we may consider the German word *Beruf* (“calling”), as it was used by Martin Luther. In the middle Ages, the term *Beruf* meant a monastic or clerical calling- in other words, a vocation to a professional ecclesiastical function. Luther began to use the same word to refer to worldly duties (p. 31).

At the time God opened the eyes of Martin Luther, the belief in monasticism had already split the sacred from secular with the idea that only those who were involved in the sacred such as the work of the priest, nun, and religious workers were holy and more spiritually justified. While the work of the farmers and any other work was seen as secular, less spiritual, and not justified. Darrow (2009) affirms that, at this time, for secular work to be justified, those involved in it had to do holy work such as attend mass, pay indulgences, and give alms to the poor which brought further enslavement and poverty to the already poor people (pp. 21-22). Thank God for Luther and the others who challenged this perspective, insisting that no external work, rather than the internal act of faith, could make a person righteous or justified before God. Bonhoeffer (1977) believed Luther’s message that what mattered was not the kind of work someone did but the faith with which the work was done (pp. 51-52).

Many African clergies and believers, most specifically those in the rural world, need to acknowledge that it is not the kind of work they do as followers of Christ or alongside their ecclesiastical duties that matters but the obedient faith with which they do their work. With the increased division of the sacred and the secular today, Christ-followers can only obey the commission they have received from their risen Lord (Matt. 28:18-20) when the bi-dimensional perspective of work counter by the Reformation is taught to believers. The Reformation maintains that all Christians, not just church workers, have a calling, and that all work, not just

spiritual work, is considered a calling. In this way the sacred and the secular distinction are abolished for those who embrace this biblical view.

To project the biblical worldview Meyers (1999) has also emphasized that the gospel message is an inextricable mix of life, deed, and sign (p. 134). He believes that Christ-followers are to be with him (life) so that they can preach the good news (word), heal the sick (deed) and cast out demons (sign). The message he seeks to convey is that of a biblical worldview that projects the spiritual and the physical as inseparable, with an equal value. Although he sees the different aspects as part of the entire gospel, his point is that the spiritual and physical dimensions need each other for the gospel to be complete.

Unfortunately, many pastors and church leaders do not acknowledge the ministry of the laity in their congregations except when they enter full-time Christian service. Bjork (2015) corroborates:

I am convinced that the current tendency to centre the life of the *ecclesia* around the Sunday morning worship service, with its professionalization of the witness of the people of God, has largely weakened the participation of the laity. It is undeniable that despite the recovery of the priesthood of all believers by Luther and Calvin, the dominant understanding remains that of Christian ministry monopolized by specially consecrated individuals. (p. 192)

Another force militating against the unity between the sacred and the secular is the ideology of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Enlightenment period. Darrow (2009, p. 24) documents how this ideology was established from a transitional metaphysics of deism which assumed, like biblical theism, that the creator, God, existed. Dissimilar to the biblical perspective, this view holds that God is not present with those He created. Even though God created the world, He is not Lord and Savior of the world. God is equivalent to an absentee landlord. Deists believe that God created the world, put it on motion, and left it solitary. He does not speak to people and does not answer prayers. In many ways, it is a belief system which is similar to that of African traditional religions.

In most rural villages in Cameroon which I have visited for ministry in the past, especially in the Mbam and Inoubou divisions, people practice ancestral worship which necessitates pouring libation to ancestors during special events to search for their blessings. They believe that their ancestors communicate on their behalf before God, considering that they are not worthy to approach God. Darrow (2009) argues that this view has a great impact over regular church members as well as the clergy as there are two realms: the spiritual and the physical, with the spiritual disengaged from the physical (p. 24). It is unquestionable that this belief and view still has an impact on the intelligence of many Christians in the African church today.

### Conclusion

Either by inheritance from the Western missionaries or by the influence of traditional worldviews, Christ-followers in Africa have all too often segregated the sacred from the secular. They have not been assisted in understanding their workstation as a place where Christ has placed them to serve him. They have not been assisted in fully merging their religion with their vocation. By preference the common people have been coerced to believe that one can serve God *only* when in full time Christian service. This conception has negatively affected the accomplishment of the Great Commission because a small number of genuine disciples have been produced. It is of primary importance that a new paradigm emerges today in Africa for making disciples of Jesus Christ where the people are instructed on how to adequately blend belief in their livelihood.



This article has revealed that the pioneer disciples accomplished exactly that. The instance of Apostle Paul and his team is a perfect model to imitate. His work was never an impediment to his service to the Lord. Instead it became a fundamental component of the call and the Lord used him powerfully to do great exploits, making more disciples than any other apostle for the growth of His Kingdom on earth. Through his tent-making job, he was able to live his life as a disciple of Jesus for the people to see. He was also able to identify with the people in order to spread the gospel and, through his job, he could hold up himself and his ministry economically, earning him trustworthiness in the midst of the people.



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